

So the alternative minimum tax is there. It's the reality. It's existed for 38 years. It's spiraling out of control, and we're very close to being in position where if we were to scrap the entire income tax system, that would cost less than to do away with the alternative minimum tax. We're only a few years away from meeting that threshold.

So what do we do? Well, Chairman RANGEL has put forward a plan that is not the only plan that's going to be discussed. It's not the only plan that's going to be offered, but it's the starting point for the discussion, and he has said that this needs to be a permanent fix. And I know in the other body they're having the same discussion, that it needs to be a permanent fix. We can't continue to do this year after year after year, and it just gets more expensive.

So this is the starting point. We have to think about that when we talk about tax policy, that this is unmistakable that we have to deal with the AMT.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. We've got to decide how we're going to fix it. Everybody on this side of the aisle and some of our friends in the Senate can sort of live in this.

Fantasyland where we're just going to do more of the same; let's fix this alternative minimum tax for middle-class taxpayers, and guess what, let's just do it by borrowing more money. That's the way I think a lot of people in the place would like to do, more of the same, borrow money in order to cut taxes.

You can't do that anymore. You can't do that for the next generation is going to end up paying all that money back. You can't do that because you can't exacerbate the existing trend, which has countries like Japan and China and OPEC nations, and Taiwan and Korea and Hong Kong and Germany owning all this American currency.

You've got to stop this. You've got to stop the madness of borrowing. So the way you do that is to be honest about how you pay for the alternative minimum tax, and we're going to have to deal with some choices here.

The Republican Congress for years made this choice. They could have fixed the alternative minimum tax. Instead, they gave away more and more and more tax breaks to their super, ultrarich friends and their oil companies and drug companies and everybody else who did well here. We're going to make some different choices.

We're going to actually balance the Federal budget in 5 years. We're going to give some tax relief, badly needed, to the middle class, and you know what? We're going to stop that policy of giving away tax breaks to folks that don't need it.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if I can intervene here, I mean, you look at the money that we're borrowing and then we're giving tax cuts. So it's not that we have the money laying around

here and say, boy, we've got a lot of money laying around here, why don't we just give the wealthiest people in our country the money back. We're actually going out to China and OPEC countries and borrowing the money to give tax cuts, and then we borrow the money from OPEC countries to fund the war to get oil from the Middle East.

This is the most convoluted scenario that you almost think you've got to read a Tom Clancy novel to drum it up. And then when you look at the priorities that aren't getting funded here that we're now trying to fund, and on the House floor today we had the minority leader, we had the minority whip, we had all the leadership of the Republican Party tell us how somehow funding education, lowering tuition costs, reducing the amount of student debt that our students are going to have to incur, funding community health clinics is somehow not an important priority, that somehow if we put all these bills together with the defense bill and the veterans bill and education bill and health bill, that somehow those aren't all American priorities, that somehow when these vets get back, that because all these bills are somehow put together in a process that's going to speed this whole thing up, that somehow when those vets get back, they don't need health care, their kids don't need health care. Somehow when the vets get back that they don't need education, they don't need increased Pell Grants to send their kids to school.

Am I missing something here? Like these vets are out fighting for our freedom here, just for a defense bill, or just for a vets bill, that they're somehow not fighting for some of these basic, fundamental American values that we have. And look what's going on back at the ranch when our friends are playing around with the budget, not wanting to pass legislation, passing tax cuts for the top 1 percent, look at the hole we've gotten into.

Now, this is something that is very important to me, and I remember a few weeks ago I was at my brother's house who has two young kids, Dominic and Nicky. One's 1 and one's 2. And my sister-in-law said it's scary about these toys. I remember her saying that.

Here's from 2001, and it goes up as the years come, the amount of imported toys coming from China. Okay. Over here, the yellow line that drops off, that is the number of Consumer Product Safety Commission employees going down. So we only have 400. As the number of imports from China and toys come into our country goes up, the Bush administration has reduced the number of Consumer Product Safety employees to actually monitor these toys. Same thing's going on with food.

So when you look at these mixed priorities, you know, sometimes we think, well, the war's going on in a far-off place or it doesn't affect me. If you've got kids and you've got toys, this irre-

sponsible behavior that we saw in Katrina, we saw with the government contracts in Iraq, comes right into your household because of a lack of investment into the United States.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Just to clarify, as the gentleman from Ohio understands, this was not the reduction that you see there in that chart. This was not a governmentwide reduction in costs where we were tightening our belts and doing the right thing and being fiscally responsible and we happen to lower the costs in the consumer safety section by reducing some payroll over there. This was the biggest spending administration and the biggest spending Congress in the history of the country.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Right.

Mr. ALTMIRE. As the gentleman points out, it's a matter of setting priorities. It's not as though they were lowering the cost of government across the board. They picked and chose what they wanted to lower, and one of the issues they thought wasn't important and we didn't need to deal with was consumer safety.

Now, I think we would all agree that consumer safety is incredibly important and especially what's happening with the Chinese imported toys, and to have dramatically less people working in that department this year than we did last year, than we did 5 and 6 and 7 years ago is outrageous.

But I did want to put it in perspective that we are raising the debt incredibly, \$3 trillion and counting in the last 7 years of this administration.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We haven't borrowed money to make sure that we can hire enough people in the Consumer Product Safety Commission to make sure our toys are safe coming in from China. We're borrowing money to give the top percent a tax break, people making millions and millions and millions of dollars a year, and hey, if you make millions, God bless you, but now we're in a position where we don't have enough employees to monitor the toys coming into the country and we're giving multimillionaires a tax break. We're borrowing the money from China, which is pretty interesting when you think about all these toys coming in from China, that we're borrowing the money to fund the war and the tax breaks from China. So China's now our bank. So now they, of course, want their products coming into the country.

So, now all of the sudden, things like the reduction in employees at the Consumer Product Safety Commission happens because the Republican House and Senate and the White House have got us so dependent.

You mind if I go through here? I don't even know what these toys are. I see them on my brother and sister-in-law's floor. You'll know soon. You're newly wed.

The football bobblehead cake decoration. Okay. These are toys that have been recalled due to lead. This has a Patriots bobblehead.